



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Cleaning Up Electrical Systems and Appliances

- An electrician or competent person should check all electrical wiring, appliances, and motors damaged by floodwater before any attempt is made to start them. Motors damaged by moisture and dirt can be burned out by careless starting, and damp wiring will short out.
- When immediate use of electric power is essential and the permanent wiring is not yet dry, temporary lines may be run for some equipment, such as pumps.
- No one should attempt to work on wiring, especially when it is wet, without turning off the main switch outside the house. Stand on a dry board even though the switch is in the open position when working on the entrance panel.
- If you have any question about your electrical system and want information or help, check with the local electric power supplier.
- The following measures will be required to cleanup your flood-damaged electrical system:
 - Wiring must be completely dried out.
 - If plaster is weak and must be replaced, take advantage of the resulting openings to circulate warm air between the framework and siding. This will speed up the drying of concealed wire.
 - Remove covers from switches, convenience outlets, light outlets, and junction boxes that have been under water.
 - If the junction box is filled with mud, remove screws holding the receptacle or switch in the box. Pull receptacle, switch, and wires in junction boxes out about 2 inches from the box. Clean out mud and dirt. Do not remove electrical connections. Leave the boxes open.
 - Remove fuses and cover from the entrance panel. Clean out mud. Wires can be moved, but do not disconnect them.

- The following measures will be required to clean up your flood-damaged electrical appliances
 - For repair of electric motors and generators, contact an electrician.
 - For refrigerators, home freezers, and electric water heaters that have been damaged, call a competent serviceperson.
 - Get a cost estimate from a professional for repairing televisions, radios, computers, and similar equipment to decide if the device is worth repairing.
 - Electric lamps can be cleaned at home using the following steps:
 - ❑ Do not plug anything into an electric circuit until house wiring has been approved for safe use.
 - ❑ To recondition floor or table lamps, start by completely disconnecting and disassembling them. Take out the light bulbs.
 - ❑ Clean out moisture and sediment from the sockets and switches.
 - ❑ Clean bulbs with a damp cloth. Then dry them thoroughly before using.
 - ❑ Use a cloth wrung out in warm, sudsy water to wash lamp bases, cords, and plugs. Replace all damaged cords and plugs.
 - ❑ For your own safety, wear rubber gloves when disconnecting or reconnecting any electrical appliance and stand on a rubber mat when replacing fuses in the service box. Be sure to replace with correct size fuses; use no substitutes.
- Washers and dryers should be reconditioned by a qualified repairman. After they have been reconditioned, sanitize them as follows:

Washer:

- Unplug the washer and wipe off the outside of the washer and inside drum with a cloth dipped in a disinfectant solution of 1/2 cup chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- Remove washing machine filter and clean with the chlorine solution.
- Rinse with a cloth dipped in clean water.
- Pour a disinfectant such as chlorine or pine oil into the empty washing machine. Check the product label for the appropriate amount. Then complete a 15-minute wash cycle at the hot-water setting

Dryer:

- Unplug the dryer and wipe the drum with a cloth dipped in a disinfectant solution of 1/2 cup chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
 - Be sure to wipe all areas of the drum, filter, dryer door, and outside of dryer.
 - Rinse with a cloth dipped in clean water.
 - Leave the dryer door open until all parts are thoroughly dry--preferably overnight.
 - When the drum is dry, plug in the dryer and resume normal service.
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- In addition to disinfecting the washer and dryer, be sure to disinfect clothes baskets, work surfaces, and containers where clean, sanitary clothes will be placed. Keep clean, disinfected clothes and other textile items separate from unclean ones and away from surfaces likely to be contaminated.

Adapted from resource material developed by the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension entitled "After a Disaster" and the Iowa State University Cooperative Extension